

The Concept of a National Idea in a Multicultural Media Space: Formal vs Informal Logics

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Abstract. On the one hand, the relevance of research is due to the great social, managerial and research potential of the ‘national idea’ concept; on the other hand, the possible risks of incorrect formation and implementation against the background of poor development of a comprehensive methodology for analysing its construction logic. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to identify and conceptualise, in the context of the theory of formality and informality, the dominant logics of understanding and shaping of the national idea that have emerged today in the modern media space. The article focuses on a comparative analysis of two dominant logics, formal (traditional), where it is understood as a directive formed by elites and is centrally determined for the general public, regardless of the local cultural characteristics of its members; and informal, the emergence of which is due to individualisation, heterogeneity, multiculturalism of modern society, and it involves an appeal to the plurality of bases and cultural nuances as well as intersecting local practices as a basis for building a new concept of the national idea. In the second version, the national idea is considered as a ‘national idea for me’, which is formed in the cross flow of official sources of information along with informal communities, personal connections and alternative versions of other nations. Differences in the language of description and forms of broadcasting, which determine the formal and informal versions of the national idea and circulate through various channels and differ in the corresponding content, are of great importance. Methodologically, we rely on the theory of formality and informality, social topology, social heterology, the provisions of the general intellect theory. Data collection methods (focused on a qualitative strategy): scientometric analysis, analysis of scientific texts, community review on VK.com, Facebook, and news analysis in the official media. The research was carried out with Russian materials and the article provides an overview and arranges academic approaches that determine both

logics, describes the main media channels and distribution practices of both versions, as well as the corresponding communication features. The strengths and weaknesses of the selected approaches are indicated by taking into account the modern cultural context.

Keywords: media communication, multicultural media space, national idea, social networks

1. Introduction

The concept ‘national idea’ shows its relevance in the situations of crises, fractures [Karlova, 2019], intensive changes [Genova, 2018; Krivoshein, Ivanenko, 2019], situations of strong external influence [Connell, 2017; Sagatova, 2019] or confrontation [Reeves, 2017], when there is a need for grounds for consolidation and adherence to unified practices of social organisation, ensuring loyalty to certain strategic actions among a significant number of citizens. It can be used as a necessary impetus for the internal modernisation of the state and the acquisition of a stable soil in the face of the destruction of traditional communities and ties; it is an important strategic resource of the state [Kazakova, 2014]. In addition, such a need is conditioned by the demand of the ruling elite for the self-description practice, a statement of the direction of the government and key stakeholders. The potential for using the ‘national idea’ concept is great in terms of its integration capabilities, when it can act as a reference point for goal-setting and a modern cultural core of practice [Vincent 2011; Vandenbroucke, 2016; Bonnett, 2017; Powell, 2017; Hellmuth, 2018]. The national idea is influential in determining the strength and influence of the world’s states and societies; it affects the positions they take in the world of information, ideas and images’ [Semenov, 2001; Karaganov, 2020]. The importance of the national idea for the Russian brand creation is high [Danilova, 2017].

The fruitfulness of the national idea concept is of great importance as a basis for research work: people’s ideas about key practices, promising areas of the country’s and society’s life accumulated in the national idea, are convenient for study and are interesting both in themselves and as a basis for understanding a wide range of social processes. At the same time, the use of the concept is fraught with a number of dangers associated with excesses, when an idea can develop into ideology, and the social subject loses the necessary measure of autonomy and independence, and unification is akin to be total whilst unique cultural traits and individual human strategies are

ignored, which, as historical experiences show, affects the social situation in an improvised manner, and is simply dangerous from the point of view of the possible flourishing of totalitarianism.

Both the indicated favourable prospects and risks associated with turning to the use of the national idea make it urgent to study in detail this concept itself, the procedures for its formation and content. However, today, despite the abundant circulation of the 'national idea' concept in the media space, its content remains very ambiguous, against the background of a variety of information sources offering both ready-made and discrete versions and fragmentary elements; there is no methodology that offers the possibility of analysing mechanisms of the national idea that somehow explain its structure and content.

Meanwhile, today we can talk about two dominant approaches that describe the information production and dissemination procedures, the analysis through the prism of which it is possible to fill the indicated gap, this is the idea of formal and informal (from Latin *informalis* — informal) practices in the media sphere. The purpose of this article is to identify and conceptualise, in the context of the theory of formality and informality, the dominant logics of understanding and shaping the national idea that have emerged today in the modern media space.

2. Methodology

The goal determined the features of the methodology used in the research. As already noted, the concepts of formal and informal channels and practices of the creation, dissemination and consumption of information are basic for identifying and describing the most noticeable logics of the formation of a national idea. One of the most famous works, that allows one to get an idea of this approach is Zhilyavskaya's book; it pertains to the features of information production in the media sphere in the fields of journalism, education etc. through the concepts of formal and informal. She notes that in addition to traditional formal (institutionalised) sources, which are represented by the professional community, non-professionals in the media take part in the creation of an information product, they also communicate information to a mass audience through blogs, open and other media. In parallel with traditional and/or official sources, every mediarate person can create and publish his/her own materials; he/she does not need any editorial board, reviewers, experts and acts in accordance with his ideas about the subject

of the statement. Therefore, in creating an information product, the entire educated but non-formalised community can participate one way or another.

Based on the descriptions proposed by the author, it is possible to single out such features of the informal production of information as self-activity, lack of formal organisation, unprofessional creators, non-economic nature, social orientation, communicativeness (close connection with other people in making a product). Referring to Rosen, she notes the disappearance of the 'one for many' broadcasting model, which, in my opinion, is true for not only journalism but also other areas of communication including the formation of a national idea. Against the backdrop of information chaos, 'informal media is a chaos of networks, which in their finished form can represent a perfect form (idea) of communication. This idea could be expressed in the statement: people are doomed to hear each other and come to an agreement' [Zhilavskaya, 2009, 210]. The same applies to informal practices of searching for and obtaining information, where its development is devoid of the rigid framework of an organised pedagogical process and can be carried out 'in the family, informal communication, in various groups and associations, in particular, in educational societies, libraries, museums as well as through mass media [Zhilavskaya, 2009, 211].

In the framework of conceptualising the indicated logics of the formation of a national idea, I focused on a combination of modern and classical social and philosophical attitudes, which make it possible to reflect the strategic and customised nature of the national idea, its dependence on the location of the subjects of design in the social space as a set of stakeholders of social and political processes in a changing context. To understand the current state of social reality, its versatility, heterogeneity, transitivity and mobility, as contexts of formation, the theories of mobility by J. Urry and Z. Bauman etc.; social topology J. Law (the concept of the primacy of the 'network' of relations over the 'social' and 'material' entities), S. A. Azarenko (topologem, practice and technology), M. Serra (statement of the relationship of spaces in terms of 'continuity', 'localisation', involvement' and 'non- involvement'), the idea of the network society M. Castells (space of flow and space of places).

An important method for the final development of the key definitions of the research is social topology (S. A. Azarenko, P. Bourdieu, C. Levin, J. Lo, M. Serre, G.-N. Fisher, M. Foucault). The use of this method makes it possible to determine a national idea in terms of the space of a human event arising and lasting precisely in the act of communication, in the manifestations

of joint activities of people. This step allows us to unpack the national idea as a set of specific relations reproduced in practice and fixed in the original orders of a society.

The basis for understanding the fundamental diversity and irreducibility of the political life of young people, and, consequently, the concepts of national idea to a single format is provided by the principles of philosophical heterology by T. Kh. Kerimov, the ideas of postoperaism by A. Negri (decentralised set and the forces of self-organisation), E. Tucker (involvement in social and political processes of 'scattered' forms of communication set-up (networks, multitudes and sets)), P. Virno (the idea of heterarchy based on communication), I. V. Krasavin (building general intelligence through the development of communication networks).

I used such research methods as scientometric analysis of thematic publications in the ELibrary.ru and Academia.edu databases; analysis and systematisation of the presented concepts; analysis of the content of thematic groups in social networks VK.com, Facebook; analysis of publications in the official media (Russian-speaking segment). The research strategy was qualitative, the emphasis was on determining the content of various statements related to the national idea, and attention was paid to the peculiarities of the means of expression in the communities under research along with the chosen communication channels.

3. Results and discussions

This should explore the significance of the results of the work, not repeat them. A combined Results and discussion section is often appropriate, and avoid extensive citations and discussion of published literature.

It has been established that concepts of the national idea and its formation order can be found; first, in the publications of the academic community representatives, where both formal and informal logics are most clearly visible; secondly, in the official statements of key government officials; thirdly, in informal thematic communities, where not only any published content is of great importance but also the communications around.

The formal approach oriented towards vertical strategy is widely represented in contemporary academic works. So, T. B. Abykeeva-Sultanalieva notes that the idea itself can only be stated, these are politicised spiritual principles designed to protect the material, spiritual and cultural interests of the elite and ruling circles [Abykeeva-Sultanalieva, 2019]. Authors put

an equal sign between the national idea and the ideology of the state, affirming its vertical and top-down nature [Nagoeva, 2018]. This logic assumes that it is the state represented by the main government representatives that should proceed with developing and further disseminating a national idea that will meet its interests, while the majority should obey and accept the developed idea that is essential for the country and all its inhabitants. It is assumed that everyone will follow the proposed idea. The state takes care of the official mechanisms, which are implemented in a centralised and uniform way, and will allow the majority to convey and communicate the idea through all existing channels. It should be noted that today official information providers willingly and actively use unconventional channels for the delivery of information along with tools, such as television or radio, well-known press etc.; you can often see pages on Instagram, Twitter, VK.com and others, where information is posted as if 'first-hand', and is no less credible than the sites of government agencies, for example. For example, direct statements regarding the national idea can be heard not only in the news of the official media but also on the Internet on less significant commercial media sites, in the ruling party groups, in pro-presidential youth communities, for example, the statement from the President of Russia V. V. Putin's speech 'patriotism is the national idea of Russia' was widely circulated on the Internet and was imbibed by a certain audience, as can be seen from the main trends in the social and political life of Russia in recent years. Conceptually, patriotism is associated with such cultural nuclei as the Great Victory, which determines the main features of the official version of the national idea, which at the level of formal (vertical) attitudes is not subject to any discussion but should be instilled in the context of a range of disciplinary, educational, and outreach measures for every citizen of the Russian Federation.

Going back to various logics in scientific research, it can be noted that for the academic community itself, in addition to such a channel for dissemination of concepts concerning the national idea as scientific publications, as well as databases disseminating those publications, today it is quite common to duplicate information on the personal pages on social networks, give additional comments and/or add visual images to publications. Thus, researchers, as bearers of professional (expert) opinions, can express themselves on both formal and informal versions via formal and informal channels. Interestingly, today there are precedents for broadcasting ready-made versions of a national idea on the part of the academic community, that is,

formal, already formulated and proposed as a kind of integrity, but the proposal is being implemented through informal channels; to promote an idea, groups are created on social networks, YouTube channels etc.; for example, an ambitious project created by the Centre for Problem Analysis and Public Administration Design with the support of the Russian Technologies State Corporation [National Idea of Russia, 2012].

The informal nature of constructing a national idea is also represented by the positions of a number of authors, who believe that its creation cannot occur vertically, i. e. a ready-made idea cannot be proposed from above and instituted institutionally; it is necessary to ensure that horizontal initiatives are collected, and at least be taken into account. So, V. A. Avatkova notes that 'the process of nation formation can and should take place in a two-way movement on the bottom-to-top and top-to-bottom basis: you cannot build a nation relying on the aspirations of the top of the state administration. It is impossible to build a nation even if there is exclusively a desire for individual elements of society, or even for most of the elements of society, without the desire for that from the administrative machinery' [Avatkov, 2016]. An interesting perspective on this problem is considered in the work of M. V. Silantjeva: she notes that ideologisation, on the one hand, is the realisation of a completely understandable desire to increase the controllability of complex and multiple-valued processes. At the same time, from historical and philosophical perspectives, the 'national idea' concept is a complex one that implicitly affirms the connection between man and freedom. The very use of this concept assumes that the possibility of the existence of both national and cultural wholes is linked to the implementation of meaningful attitudes of personal development as a unique and universal unity within the framework of a special whole, both national and cultural. In this case, the national idea is initially interpreted as a non-ideological project capable of coordinating its projections with the ideological level of the social and cultural design and, at the same time, resisting mono-ideological strategies for formatting social space as a civil unity of a certain type, that is totalitarianism [Silantjeva, 2017].

According to N. N. Shchetinina, the national idea is the integration of the 'way of life' and 'way of thinking' of citizens of one state. The author also notes that it is necessary to distinguish on what grounds this idea arises and be clearly aware of this. Without this, the political forces along with the broad social strata of our country, may never meet in a common conceptual, and

therefore, ideological field. At the same time, the seizure of an already incipient idea and its promotion will still be carried out by the forces of acting political actors [Shchetinina, 2011]. K. G. Krasnukhin notes that it is important to formulate an idea, you cannot take it from outside; but you also need to rely on cultural stereotypes and people's self-awareness [Krasukhin, 1998, 9]. A similar idea is voiced by K. A. Kaveev, who notes the presence of a 'personal 'national idea' at the level of a specific individual and a 'national idea' at the level of the state and society. It is not always clearly understood, nor it has any clear outlines and is difficult to formulate, but the social development prospects and people of the state depend on it. He also speaks about the difference between national and state ideas, which 'at certain stages can be identical'. To determine the future vector of Russia's development, it will be necessary to formulate a 'national idea' in understandable and clear ways not only for the political elite but also for the entire population of the country. It provides the methodological basis and raises awareness of the need for a clear understanding of the 'national interests' of the state and society, and on their basis, it will allow formulating the 'national security' concept, which will provide the basis for the formation of the 'domestic and foreign policy' concept. A well-thought-out and validated development strategy, which is specified in the set of development goals, in building a 'tree of goals', will become a tool for implementing the 'national idea'. Being a systemic phenomenon, it is concretised as a strategy at the federal, regional and local levels of government [Kaveev, 2017]. For the Azerbaijani researcher Allahverdiyev, the national idea in a generalised form reflects the dominant ideas in the national consciousness about the historical fate of the people, their cultural mission in the world etc. The national idea is most often a kind of 'dream slogan' directly arising from the ethnocultural identity of the people (ethnos), rather vague in its outlines, but clearly emphasising its focus on the transformation of an ethnos into a nation. In contrast to it, a national ideology is used as a vector of mobilisation of an already formed or emerging nation on the way of its transformation into a full-fledged ethnosocial organism, that is, on the way of the nation's growing with the state [Allahverdiyev, 2015; Chaker, 2017; Bahranov, 2016; Bellamy, 2018].

Thus, in the logic of the informal approach, the national idea is collected, as far as possible, in communication in everyday life, in not always pronounced and rationally comprehended images and attitudes, on the basis of which it is necessary to formulate any theses and establishments. This

idea is reflected in the desire of some authors to search for the foundations of the national idea in horizontal logic within the framework of the analysis of various artifacts [Arbatskaya, 2010; Pavlova, 2008; Rozhdestvenskaya, 2019; Esina, 2020; Logvinov, 2020].

The national idea generated informally is created as a combination of acceptable and desirable human practices, in the flows of communication and human co-existence. In fact, an idea in one or another more or less conscious form appears in a modern person as a 'national idea for me'. It is quite important for the awareness and content of the horizontal version of the idea to have the possibility of seeing and discussing possible options, components and directions in which the idea can crystallize. Informal communities are of great importance here. They can offer various versions of national ideas, for example, an interesting project by T. N. Mikushina, is a ready-made concept of a national idea, which is posted on a personal website, in groups of all major social networks, and which, according to the author's idea, should be supported by at least 1 % of the Russian population (about 1,500,000 people) for implementation. However, non-professional authors often influence the emergence of an idea, who create content in thematic groups, whose repertoire is very diverse — from nationalistic attitudes, pedagogical projects, to the exploration of deep space as a national idea. As a rule, such media create an opportunity and even call for discussion (they propose to discuss private issues on the topic in the comments, post the discussion works of classics, thematic films or literary objects for discussion; often calls are made to become authors (administrators) of all those who are close to such problems; created are special topics devoted to the definition and content of the 'national idea' concept) Only in the Russian-language segment of VK. com, the search engine for the query 'national idea' made it possible to find 42 communities devoted to this problem, most of which have more than 500 subscribers, actively participates in discussions, reposts, likes and comments on the proposed materials.

As noted in the interesting critical work of A. V. Yurevich, one of the main characteristics of modern versions of the Russian idea is its pronounced negative character — paying great attention to what we should not be, in contrast to what we should become. Modern projects for the development of Russia and, hence, variants of our national idea can be divided into two groups. One type of project is based on a rather tough and aggressive opposition of Russia to the West, while the other is based on borrowing all the best from it and

supplementing it with its own [Yurevich, 2017]. This is true for not only the academic environment but also the entire media industry in the field. Several dozen groups have been found on social networks where attention is paid to the problems of 'what is bad' and 'what is good' in Russia, where, through short posts about the problems or successes of the Russian life, online users are fruitfully invited to participate in discussion. The problem is often posed precisely through the opposition of Russia and the western countries. Criticism, condescending and sometimes mocking posts offered by the subscribers themselves, which help readers clearly understand what they would not like to see in the future, what practices they would like to avoid, are very typical. Due to such communities, subscribers, and there are on average about 200,000 in such groups, can reflect on a problem, share information with others, and draw up their own concept of the national idea. For communities, such as, for example, 'Miracles of the Russian Federation', 'Time to Shove off', 'Conceptual Vandalism', 'Peskov's Mustache' etc., not only textual statements, which are often minimal in posts, are very important but also visual selections as well as videos. Often there you can find both positive content (beautiful landscapes, images of resourceful people, technology etc.) and hilarious pictures (drunks, injuries, vandalism, hooliganism, ruins etc.). The opportunity to see different sides of life as well as quickly get acquainted with the opinion of other people about the situation through comments (where users also often attach files, links, pictures and exchange information) makes it possible for one to quickly immerse oneself in the discourse and create your own vision of the nation's future.

4. Conclusions

The formal institutional practices of the national idea formation remain; although the vertical logic 'from one to many' is no longer the only one, it is no longer dominating. Poles of activity turn out to be horizontal practices focused on small formats, non-professional but intensive communication, attraction of audiovisual, figurative means of expression, stimulation of a broad discussion, which creates a private, individualised discourse around the construct 'national idea'. As has been shown, this situation is clearly reflected in academic research, and is also clearly visible in the analysis of the content of traditional and new media. The informal nature of the formation of the structure and content of a national idea ensures the influence on them from ethnic, religious, sub-cultural and other microideologies including those characterised by a number

of radical features. Collected in the informal logic, the 'national idea' concept allows us to analyse the conceptual foundations of social and political activities, to get an idea of the political autotopology of modern citizens and understand the coordinate system and the projection of the future at the social level.

The proposed methodology for considering the formation of the 'national idea' concept in the formality/informality logic made it possible to separate the national ideas, vertical and horizontal in origin, to show the differences in the mechanisms of their emergence. The refined 'horizontal' concept of the national idea itself fills the theoretical gap that now exists in this area: the contours of the national idea phenomenon remain blurred, despite the wide demand for the term itself and many discussions that have flared up around it with renewed vigour in recent years. The author's position lies in the fixation on the disclosure of the theoretical and practical potential of the construct of the national idea lies precisely in the discovery of the content that is put into it by people, since then the national becomes such when it grows from the bottom. A national idea, in both theoretical and applied terms, can be effective when it is associated with not only institutions, including an enlarged institution of the state, but it provides a link between the latter and society and its practices. In the face of such threats as a decreased trust in official institutions, an increase in negative migration trends among the country's talented contingent, as well as taking into account some discredited 'spiritual bonds', a certain ideological resource is required, a basis for rallying and collaborative activities within the country, which would arise on real grounds, which is especially important for young people, and which makes the results of this research quite promising.

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